United Nations A/60/PV.63

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

63rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 December 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/60/250/Add.3)

The President: In the first paragraph of the report of the General Committee contained in document A/60/250/Add.3, the Committee informs the General Assembly that, by a vote of five to three, with 17 abstentions, the Committee decided not to recommend the inclusion of the item entitled "Protracted conflicts in the Black Sea-South Caucasus region and their implications for international peace, security and development" in the agenda of the sixtieth session.

The second paragraph of the same report concerns a request by Costa Rica for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item entitled "Follow-up to the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme".

The General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item, amended to read "Follow-up to the recommendations on administrative management and internal oversight of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme", be included in the agenda of the current session under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Kelley: I would like to inform members that, should the General Assembly decide to include this new item in its agenda, that by itself would not give rise to financial implications. Should the Assembly subsequently decide, under this agenda item, that the Volcker report or parts therefore be translated and reproduced in all official languages, the financial implications would be the following.

Official translation and reproduction in five volumes of the whole Volcker report, including the report of the Working Group, in the six official languages would amount to $2,717,300.

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Official translation and reproduction in one volume of volume I of the Volcker report in the six official languages would amount to $258,800.

Reproduction of the whole Volcker report in English only would amount to $82,000.

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

05-64493 (E)

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this item in the agenda of the current session under heading I?

It was so decided.

The President: In the same paragraph, the General Committee further recommends that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I would like to inform members that the item entitled "Follow-up to the recommendations on administrative management and internal oversight of the Independent Inquiry Committee into the United Nations Oil-for-Food Programme" becomes item 160 on the agenda of the current session.

Agenda item 73 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: draft resolution (A/60/L.37)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolutions (A/60/L.34, A/60/L.38 and A/60/L.39)

Amendment (A/60/L.35)

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Draft resolution (A/60/L.36)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly already held the debate on agenda item 73 and its sub-items (a), (c) and (d) at its 51st and 52nd plenary meetings on 14 November 2005, and adopted three resolutions under the item at its 52nd plenary meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.34.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): It gives me great pleasure to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.34, entitled "Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence", in our capacity as the representative of the Chairman of the African Union and on behalf of the African Group, which has strongly endorsed this draft resolution.

In addition to the sponsors listed in the document, the following States have joined in sponsorship: Angola, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Netherlands, Sudan, Sweden, Timor-Leste and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The tragic events that occurred in Rwanda from April to July 1994 are among the darkest and most dreadful in human history. Up to one million lives were lost. One million ordinary men, women and children were condemned to die for no other reason beside the fact that they belonged to a particular ethnic group or identified with a particular ethnic group.

The Rwandan genocide inflicted untold suffering on those who survived it. The most vulnerable groups of survivors were children and women. The children, apart from the trauma of watching their parents and siblings being slaughtered, were orphaned by the genocide and left alone in the world to fend for themselves. Most of these children have since had to live in child-headed households. Similarly, women not only watched their husbands and children being killed, but also underwent unspeakable physical abuse, in particular, sexual violence, which resulted in HIV infection in more than 60 per cent of the cases.

The draft resolution before us is intended to achieve two main objectives. First, it intends to encourage the international community to provide assistance to these vulnerable groups. Secondly, it sets out, through the capacities of the United Nations, to build awareness of the events of 1994 so that the world will be a better place in which to live.

It should be noted that, despite the best efforts of the Government of Rwanda and the support of the international community, many survivors remain very vulnerable and live in conditions of extreme poverty. We, the international community, must ensure that we do not disappoint the survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by failing to come to their assistance, once more, in their hour of need.

My delegation coordinated four informal meetings to negotiate the draft before us. Much of the language in this draft resolution is agreed language from last year's General Assembly resolution 59/137, which was adopted without a vote. Two new operative paragraphs are included in this draft. These paragraphs deal with the creation of educational and outreach programmes on the prevention of genocide and contain language identical to a resolution adopted by consensus during this session of the General Assembly.

My delegation commends this draft resolution for the consideration of the General Assembly and looks forward to its adoption without a vote.

The President: In connection with draft resolution A/60/L.34 and the amendment thereto contained in document A/60/L.35, I would like to inform Members, after consultations, that action on these two documents is postponed to a later date to allow time for the review of their programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): It is my pleasure, on behalf of the European Union (EU), to introduce draft resolutions A/60/L.36, which is entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian People", and A/60/L.37, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

With regard to draft resolution A/60/L.36, the European Union reiterates its commitment to the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people. Sustained donor support from the international community, working with the parties, is crucial if we are to see an improvement to the Palestinian economic and social infrastructure and to address the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people.

For its part, the European Union has undertaken to provide the "third party" role described in the recent Agreement on Movement and Access issues reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The European Union will monitor the operations of the Rafah border crossing point and provide assistance to reinforce Palestinian border management capacities. Capacity-building, through training, equipment and technical assistance, is being taken forward through the European Community's assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The European Union, alongside other Quartet members and international partners, is ready to assist the Palestinian Authority financially, technically and politically with their forthcoming multiparty elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council. We are prepared to send an observer mission to ensure that the elections are carried out in line with international principles for genuine democratic elections.

The European Union will also continue to provide technical and economic aid to the Palestinian people and contribute to the strengthening of Palestinian institutions, with the aim of seeing a peaceful and democratic State governed by the rule of law.

The European Union will continue to work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community to achieve the shared vision of a two-State solution set out in the road map. Both parties can count on the sustained support of the European Union in the ongoing effort to find a peaceful, durable and just settlement of the conflict.

One country, in addition to the sponsors on the tabled draft resolution, has requested to be included as an additional sponsor of draft resolution A/60/L.36 on "Assistance to the Palestinian People", and that country is Zambia.

With regard to draft resolution A/60/L.37, it is important to recognize that humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel provide an invaluable service to millions of civilians and vulnerable populations around the world, often in very difficult and challenging circumstances and often at great personal risk. The fact that such personnel have become increasingly exposed to security-related attacks and incidents, and that the perpetrators of such acts seemingly operate with impunity, clearly demonstrates why this issue demands our most urgent attention.

The draft resolution highlights, in particular, the need to strengthen the normative framework for the safety and protection of humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel. In this regard, the draft resolution calls on all States to consider becoming parties to, and to respect fully their obligations under, all relevant provisions of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol.

The draft resolution also highlights the need to promote and enhance security management within the

United Nations system, as well as cooperation and coordination with other relevant organizations with a view to addressing mutual security concerns. In that regard, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to continue his good work, including by further enhancing security consciousness within the Organization and by further developing and implementing a strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations.

The informal consultations on the draft resolution were conducted in a positive manner, and we thank all interested delegations for their constructive engagement on the text. It is our sincere hope that this draft resolution will help contribute to wider efforts to provide the security and protection required for humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel to assist those in need.

Finally, in addition to the countries listed, the following countries have requested to be included as sponsors of draft resolution A/60/L.37, on safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel: Andorra, Brazil, Chile, Hungary, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and Uruguay.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.38.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, draft resolution A/60/L.38, on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

It is a particular honour, Sir, to introduce this draft resolution under your presidency, as it draws upon the groundbreaking work for United Nations humanitarian assistance in which you once took the lead, which resulted in the often-referred-to resolution 46/182 of 1991. The draft before us today would lead to further progress in strengthening the coordination of the United Nations humanitarian system, which you helped to create in 1991.

I should like to announce that, since the draft resolution was submitted to the Assembly, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Hungary, Jamaica, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Nicaragua, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United States of America.

My delegation is grateful for the improvements made in the text by delegations through a series of informal consultations. We would like to thank the sponsors and other delegations for the good and constructive spirit of cooperation and partnership in which the consultations were held. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, for ably guiding our work.

The draft resolution addresses both issues of important principle for humanitarian assistance and issues related to efforts to further strengthen international humanitarian response.

With regard to the first category, I would like to emphasize that the draft reaffirms the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence for the provision of humanitarian assistance and calls upon Governments and parties in complex humanitarian emergencies to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies and organizations and to ensure safe and unhindered access to affected populations. It expresses the General Assembly's grave concern about violence deliberately directed against civilian populations in many emergency situations. It calls upon States to adopt preventive measures and effective responses to acts of violence against civilian populations and invites States to promote a culture of protection. It also expresses deep concern at the number and scale of natural disasters and their horrific impact, which we have witnessed this year in the Indian Ocean region and more recently in Pakistan, the United States and Central America.

In the second category, the main issue is the upgrading of the current Central Emergency Revolving Fund to a Central Emergency Response Fund — a measure that will ensure a more predictable and timely response to humanitarian emergencies. Its objectives will be to promote early action and response aimed at reducing loss of life. It will enhance the response to time-critical requirements and will address situations in which humanitarian response is underfunded.

The draft urges Member States — and invites the private sector and all concerned individuals and

institutions — to consider making contributions to the Fund. Many generous pledges have already been made, totalling more than $107 million. And I am pleased to announce that today, the Swedish Government decided to contribute $40 million before the end of the year, so that the new Fund can become operational almost immediately after we take a decision here. Our collective aim should be to reach $500 million.

The draft resolution also encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue its efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and calls upon relevant humanitarian actors to strengthen humanitarian response capacity at all levels and coordination at the field level and to enhance transparency, performance and accountability. It also calls for improvement of the consolidated appeals process.

In its final paragraph, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to report to the next session of the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on progress made in strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

I would like to make two technical corrections to the text. At the end of operative paragraph 15, the comma between the words "State" and "as" should be deleted. In paragraph 17, the words "that" and "is" after first word, "Affirms", should be deleted; the paragraph would thus begin, "Affirms its role to provide".

My delegation and the other sponsors hope that the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.38 will be adopted by consensus.

The President: I noticed the beginnings of a round of applause at the statement just made by the representative of Sweden, which I think was in tribute to the setting up of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which will make a great difference. I will come back to that issue later when the Secretary-General joins us. But I am also grateful for the draft resolution's reference to resolution 46/182, adopted on 20 December 1991. It was finalized at about 1 a.m. of the night of 17 and 18 December 1991. I was the Chair of those negotiations. I only want to say that at that time the goal was to achieve a huge fund of $50 million. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund, as it was called, became operational on 1 May 1992. We received the last $1 million on 30 April 1992. We were extremely happy when that took place; we had the Fund on 1 May 1992.

It is a sign of how serious these issues have become when one realizes that here we are talking about a fund 10 times that size. It is both a sad and a joyful occasion — sad to note that we have huge disasters in the world that require such great resources, but also a good sign that there is enough solidarity in the world to make sure that such a fund is to be put in place. I think that at Christmas, at holiday time, we need to have that sign of solidarity, but also a sign that we are on the way to fulfilling one issue after another of the summit outcome document.

I just made a little bit of an excursion from the normal functions of the presidency; I hope members do not consider this a Swedish conspiracy to influence the agenda, but it was in a good cause.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.39.

Mrs. Bowen (Jamaica): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, draft resolution A/60/L.39, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

We are pleased to announce that in addition to the sponsors listed in the text — Greece, Japan, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United Kingdom — the following countries have also joined as sponsors: Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

I wish to make a slight editorial correction to operative paragraph 10 of the English text. In line 7, delete the "s" in the word "notes", so that the relevant phrase reads "takes note in this regard".

Natural disasters have always been a part of our reality; however, over the last year in particular, we have witnessed an increase in the frequency and scale of their occurrence, creating serious challenges for many countries suffering their adverse effects. Some of the consequences are long-lasting, especially in developing countries where they can seriously affect social and economic development. We are well aware that it may not be possible to totally eliminate the suffering caused by natural disasters, but we believe

that the international response should not only focus on immediate response but also on the long-term rehabilitation and developmental needs of States recovering from them.

The draft resolution is based on the substance of previous texts on the same subject and attempts have been made to streamline and update it, based on recent developments. To begin with, the text, inter alia, reaffirms resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, which sets out the guiding principles for the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system. We also recall your outstanding role, Mr. President, in finalizing that resolution.

The draft also emphasizes the role of the concerned State in minimizing the impact of a natural disaster, while also recognizing the importance of international cooperation in supporting the efforts of affected countries which may have limited capacities to fulfil that requirement. The Group of 77 and China also recognizes the necessity of coordination among respective partners, including affected States, regional and international organizations and civil society, throughout relief operations in medium and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction, in a manner that reduces vulnerability to future natural hazards.

The Group of 77 and China attaches importance to strengthening the efforts of countries, in particular developing countries, to enhance their capacities at all levels in order to prepare for and respond rapidly to natural disasters and to mitigate against their harmful effects.

We are grateful to our partners for the constructive, compromising and friendly spirit in which our informal consultations on the draft took place. That has led to a reasonable outcome which we hope will be confirmed by the adoption of the text by consensus.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the outstanding work of the Indian delegation, in particular Ms. Ruchi Ghanashyam, in facilitating the text.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/60/L.36, A/60/L.37, A/60/L.38, as orally corrected, and A/60/L.39, as orally corrected.

Before giving the floor to the representative of Cuba, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolutions, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Cumberbach Miguén (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation's explanation of vote will refer to draft resolution A/60/L.38. Cuba considers with special attention the question of humanitarian assistance. If one lives in a region where climatic occurrences are increasingly frequent and each time leave behind greater destruction, then efforts in that area are essential to help mitigate the effects of those disasters. Moreover, we have extended our cooperation to our neighbours in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico to cope with the consequences of hurricanes that afflict the area.

We believe, however, that the urgent needs of those caught in emergency situations should not be used to introduce notions that do not enjoy consensus among the members of the General Assembly, such as the so-called culture of protection referred to in operative paragraph 3.

Furthermore, we would like to make it clear that operative paragraph 9 should not be understood as reinterpreting the agreement on the triennial comprehensive review of programmes, that there must be no attempt to expand the mandates and functions of United Nations officials present in particular countries and that the use of the terms "appropriate authority, resources and accountability" in this case refers strictly to the internal functioning of agencies in the field.

Lastly, we sincerely hope that the expansion of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund will help tackle the funding requirements of humanitarian emergencies and that the resources that are distributed in an equitable manner are not earmarked in advance. Disbursement of funds should be carried out with respect for resolution 46/182, which sets out guiding principles for the provision of such humanitarian assistance.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/60/L.36, L.37, L.38, as orally corrected, and L.39, as orally corrected.

We will first take action on draft resolution A/60/L.37, which is entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

Angola, Cape Verde, Fiji, Grenada, Mali, Malta, Spain and Ukraine have added their names to the list of sponsors.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.37?

Draft resolution A/60/L.37 was adopted (resolution 60/123).

The President: Draft resolution A/60/L.38 is entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

Angola, Belize, Cape Verde, Grenada, Guatemala, Israel, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova, the Seychelles, Spain, Timor-Leste, Thailand and Ukraine have added their names to the list of sponsors.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.38, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/60/L.38, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 60/124).

The President: Draft resolution A/60/L.39 is entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.39, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/60/L.39, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 60/125).

The President: We now turn to draft resolution A/60/L.36, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

I call on the representative of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Brazier (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom would like to propose a revision to the fourth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/60/L.36. The new paragraph would read as follows:

> "Gravely concerned at the deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people, in particular children, throughout the occupied territory, which constitutes a mounting humanitarian crisis".

The revision was agreed in informal consultations and has not been reflected in the text submitted.

The President: Cape Verde has become an additional sponsor of draft resolution A/60/L.36.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.36, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/60/L.36, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 60/126).

The President: Before giving the floor to representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Cohen (Israel): Israel has maintained longstanding support for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, and we are pleased to join the consensus on this resolution. We worked closely with the European Union, the United States and the Palestinians in order to be able to support this resolution and we are very happy that these issues can be affirmed in this context.

I would like to emphasize that the drafting of this resolution was an example of a process that has fostered mutual respect and compromise. Unlike so many resolutions that target Israel in a biased, unbalanced manner, this resolution demonstrates that finding the middle ground is beneficial to our mutual endeavours, and we hope that such a mechanism will be replicated in future resolutions that address the Middle East.

We believe that alleviating human suffering and enhancing the security, welfare and prosperity of all peoples in the Middle East are crucial components of successful peace initiatives, and the Israeli Government sets those goals as vital objectives. We have taken a number of steps to improve the humanitarian welfare of our Palestinian neighbours, such as working to the greatest extent possible in an environment marred by terrorism, to transport food, medicine, humanitarian assistance and other necessities to Palestinian areas.

Israeli and Palestinian civilians have endured great difficulty and pain as a result of ongoing terrorist activity during the past five years. We believe that this

dangerous phenomenon continues to serve as the largest obstacle to improving the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. The fact that terrorist organizations freely operate within the Palestinian Authority serves as a direct threat to Israeli and Palestinian civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, humanitarian efforts are all too often exploited by terrorist organizations. Several weeks ago, an important agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority regarding the border crossings was agreed upon. Currently, arrangements are being made to enable passage from Gaza to the West Bank. Unfortunately, Israel is receiving reports that known terrorists are freely crossing the Rafah border from Egypt into the Gaza Strip. The underlying cause of the violence in the region and the root of the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people remains that unfortunate, yet preventable type of violence.

Having said all that, and despite the horrific terror act in Netanya a few days ago, it should be emphasized that, as of 12 December 2005, 23,000 Palestinian employees — 7,000 from the Gaza Strip and 16,000 from the West Bank — are approved to work in Israel in different sectors. In addition, 14,200 Palestinians who are international organization employees are crossing into Israel every day — 12,500 from the West Bank and 1,700 from the Gaza Strip.

Israel believes that humanitarian assistance must be provided without selectivity or politicization. Israel's decision to join consensus on this resolution should reflect that non-political good will. It should not be misconstrued as an endorsement of certain items within the text that contradict both the language expressed in the agreements of the parties and the underlying spirit of those agreements. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that civilians on both sides in the conflict endure pain. No one party has a monopoly on suffering, and we must ensure that both peoples live without violence or fear.

The well-being of Palestinian and Israeli civilians alike will come about only through the mutual fulfilment of the obligations set out in the road map. The first phase of the road map requires the Palestinian Authority to put a stop to terrorism. Israel realizes that dismantling the terrorist infrastructure represents a difficult course of action. However, in order to advance towards peace, it is a necessary course of action. Israel remains hopeful that, with responsible leadership and effective institutions, the dismantling of terrorist organizations and a commitment to peaceful coexistence, Israelis and Palestinians can work together to improve the humanitarian conditions of both our peoples.

The President: I welcome the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

We all have reason to warmly welcome the General Assembly's adoption today of several important resolutions in the humanitarian area. I want particularly to highlight the landmark resolution on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, which establishes the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). This represents a major modernization and a great step forward for the basic framework of the United Nations coordination of international humanitarian assistance that was set out in General Assembly 46/182, adopted in 1991.

All members, whom I wish to thank, have worked hard on achieving that important outcome. I would like to express particular thanks to Ambassador Anders Lidén of Sweden and to the coordinator of the resolution, Mr. Pelle Enarsson, for successfully concluding the negotiation on that matter.

I would also like to express my gratitude here to the overall coordinator of these important humanitarian resolutions considered directly in plenary, Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit of Luxembourg, for his able leadership in ensuring coherence and the timely conclusion of the humanitarian resolution. All of them have done a great job, and I thank them.

By today's action on the Central Emergency Response Fund, we have fulfilled the mandate given by our leaders, who last September called upon us in the summit outcome document to make concrete improvements to the humanitarian response system, including the timeliness and predictability of humanitarian funding. Today therefore also marks a day when we are moving from words to deeds and to the implementation of what our leaders decided in September.

By establishing the CERF, we have taken a critical decision to ensure that the international response to today's humanitarian crises is more effective and more equitable. Moreover, we have

demonstrated that the States Members of the United Nations are willing to meet the demands of the twenty-first century in this important area in a flexible and responsible way. I am grateful to Member States for their generous contributions to the Fund.

With this resolution, a sizeable grant element has been added to the existing CERF to help launch relief operations in the crucial days of a crisis, to prevent a crisis from spiralling out of control, and to address imbalances in emergency funding. We have called upon the Secretary-General to make the necessary managerial, administrative and advisory arrangements to launch and implement the new CERF. We have also affirmed the importance of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council in providing guidance for the use of the Fund, in line with the principles laid down in resolution 46/182 of 1991.

Improved humanitarian financing, however, is only one of the key components of the humanitarian reform process. We also need to strengthen the capacity of the global humanitarian system and continue to improve the coordination of humanitarian activities in the field. Work will proceed on that in the General Assembly in the spring.

These components of the humanitarian reform agenda must be taken forward together, across the Secretariat, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, if they are to be effective. All three areas deserve the continued attention and support of Member States.

We have adopted this resolution today with the support of donor and recipient countries, from those most prone to disasters and those most able and willing to lend assistance. Such broad ownership of this resolution demonstrates the truly global nature and impact of humanitarian crises and reinforces the need to act with common resolve. It is through our collective action and continued support of these reforms that we will succeed in improving the global humanitarian system and, by that, make a difference for human beings in dire need.

I am gratified that we are ending a particularly difficult year in terms of humanitarian crises on a more positive note. Images of the devastating effects of giant hurricanes in the Caribbean, of the mudslides in Central America and the horrific earthquakes in South Asia are still before us and are engraved in our minds and in our souls.

Here I would like to pay tribute to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), under the strong leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, and to all the humanitarian organizations and staff who have helped alleviate the pain and suffering brought about by far too many man-made and natural disasters around the world.

The year 2005 demonstrated, in lives lost and in livelihoods destroyed, just how destructive, indiscriminate and widespread humanitarian emergencies can be. But today we have also seen that there is solidarity, there is passion in acting, there is compassion in acting. Without passion, nothing happens in life. Without compassion, the wrong things happen. Let us make a strengthened humanitarian response system our common commitment and our goal for 2006.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am delighted that Member States have approved the standing Central Emergency Revolving Fund mandated by the outcome document of the world summit. As a result of this resolution, the upgraded Fund will become known as the Central Emergency Response Fund. The Assembly's action today ensures that in the critical realm of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations will do more and do it sooner.

As the States Members of the United Nations know better than anyone, the World Summit Outcome was a very ambitious document, and its follow-up is a daunting task. That was clear from the start, but it was also clear that a bold vision was necessary to prepare the United Nations for the twenty-first century. Today, thanks to the efforts of President Eliasson and of the entire membership, we celebrate our first success.

The Emergency Fund has been a critical part of broad humanitarian reform. As outlined in my report "In larger freedom", such reform must provide for more timely and predictable funding, a strengthened humanitarian response capacity and better field coordination.

For far too long, humanitarian assistance for disaster victims has remained a reactive process. Relief funds have been sought only after disaster has struck. Equally unacceptable is the unequal funding of different crises, with televised or strategically situated suffering receiving disproportionate attention. This has

meant that, all too often, as money trickled in, lives which could and should have been saved were lost.

That is why I am especially encouraged by the broad General Assembly consensus in favour of this new stand-by fund. I hope that this support will translate into generous and immediate funding. If it does, it will allow more equitable distribution of relief, based on demonstrated need. It will also allow us to make emergency grants for rescue work in the aftermath of disasters. Quite simply, it will save lives.

Already, at September's summit, donor nations have pledged $175 million in indicative support for the fund. Most of this money has been pledged by the European Union States. I thank them for their generosity and call on other Member States to contribute no less wholeheartedly.

For our part, we in the Secretariat will consult with Member States and with other stakeholders to work out detailed administrative and management arrangements for the stand-by Fund. We promise to manage it with utmost transparency. We will be accountable, and we shall provide full public disclosure of all donations and expenditures. I think that, as the President has indicated, this will allow the Humanitarian Coordinator and all our humanitarian staff to respond much more quickly, and it will provide an essential means of doing so that they have lacked over the past year, as we have seen in one crisis after the other.

I hope that more pieces of the summit follow-up puzzle will fall into place soon. In that regard, I look forward to next week's adoption by Member States of the revised draft resolution to establish the Peacebuilding Commission.

In the meantime, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Assembly on today's historic achievement.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his important statement and for his encouragement and support for humanitarian work and for the humanitarian workers, out there in the field, here at home at Headquarters and all over the world. I wish also to thank him for his expression of solidarity with the victims of disasters, whom we should always keep in mind.

I give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Ms. Rasheed (Palestine): On behalf of the delegation of Palestine, allow me to extend our thanks to the European Union for putting forth the resolution which was just adopted by consensus, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", and to thank all delegations for having supported this resolution.

We should also like to thank the European Union for the inclusion of language on Palestinian children in this resolution, following the outcome of successful negotiations held during this session. We believe that such an inclusion of language on Palestinian children in a consensus resolution in the General Assembly sends a very strong message to the Palestinian people that the international community has recognized and addressed the detrimental effects of the Israeli occupation on the lives of Palestinian children.

We believe also that this resolution will send a strong message of solidarity to the entire Palestinian population living under Israel's 38-year-long brutal occupation and will indeed greatly assist in ameliorating their tragic plight.

We look forward to the day when the Palestinian people will not have to depend on humanitarian assistance from the international community and will be able to live in their own independent State of Palestine, free from occupation, free from fear and State terrorism committed by Israel, the occupying power, and free from Israeli subjugation.

The President: With this, we can conclude these deliberations on these issues. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 73?

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 73 and its sub-item (a).

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 10

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/556)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will now consider agenda item 10, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The report of the Secretary-General has been circulated in document A/60/556.

Mr. Choisuren (Mongolia): It is a great privilege and a distinct honour for me to speak here, representing the host country of the fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD), held in Ulaanbaatar in 2003. I speak here also in my capacity as current ICNRD Chair.

The global momentum towards democratization, generated over the last three decades, during which many States, including my own, have embarked upon a process of democratization and many others have moved to restore their democratic roots, is truly remarkable in its scope and strength. Democracy today is firmly established as a universal value. This was most recently reaffirmed by the world leaders in the outcome document of the recent world summit.

The movement of new or restored democracies, now global, was a product of the "third wave of democratization". Since its inception 17 years ago, the movement has, in its turn, played a prominent role in further promoting the process of democratization that has swept the world. The conferences of new or restored democracies have been a source of inspiration for many fledgling democracies in their struggle to build modern and functioning democratic societies based upon the principles of pluralism, respect for human rights, freedom of the press and democratic governance. The conferences have adopted important declarations and plans of action and have facilitated the exchange of views, experiences and lessons learnt among a wide array of new, restored and mature democracies.

Declarations and plans, though important, are not enough. They must be followed by concrete actions or, to borrow the words of the Secretary-General in his report *In larger freedom*, "commitments must be matched by performance". My country, Mongolia, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, has therefore initiated, for the first time in the history of ICNRD, the pioneering experience of implementing practical follow-up activities to the outcome documents of the conference and catalysing a process of national adaptation and development of the international democracy agenda. Information on the innovations that Mongolia is piloting within the framework of the ICNRD-5 follow-up is contained in the Secretary-General's report under this agenda item contained in document A/60/556. Allow me, nevertheless, to touch briefly upon some of these innovations.

The Government of Mongolia has launched a pilot programme aimed at: first, formulating a national plan of action to consolidate democracy, and secondly, developing nationally-owned democratic governance indicators and preparing a country information note for Mongolia to measure its democratic performance, thus establishing the baselines for and benchmarking the democratic process in the country. This programme will facilitate the design and piloting of methodologies that other new or restored democracies can use in the preparation of their national action plans, country information notes and democracy indicators databases, as agreed under the Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action.

In the context of developing democratic governance indicators and the national plan of action, Mongolia held its very first national state-of-democracy conference in June of this year. It brought together representatives of Government and civil society in an all-inclusive discussion of the quality of democracy in the country, its opportunities and challenges, and democratic solutions to crucial development issues Mongolia is now facing. Regional dialogues and consultations are now being planned to share Mongolia's follow-up experiences with other new or restored democracies.

Let me underline the importance of the growing need to assess progress in democratization. Improving the quality of democracy has become a political requirement in both the new or restored democracies and the mature democracies. Today, a general commitment to the norms of democracy is no longer enough. The development of democracy assessment methodologies and governance indicator exercises contributes to the systematic assessment of a country's political life by the people in democracies and helps to answer the question: how democratic is a society in practice? How far have we progressed and what needs to be done to strengthen democracy in the future? So far, it is only in the Fifth ICNRD outcome documents that the Governments of new or restored democracies, along with their counterparts from mature democracies,

have expressed their willingness to develop nationally-owned democratic governance indicator databases to be better able to monitor their progress in democratic and social development over time. The development of such indicators in Mongolia will be the first attempt to produce a democracy assessment under the aegis of a governmental institution — the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in our case.

Democracy is not an abstract value; it has a direct impact on the everyday lives of people. As our leaders stressed in the outcome document, democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; therefore, the socio-economic dimension of democratization must be fully taken into account lest we put to risk the very credibility of that process. Accordingly, the democratic governance indicators in Mongolia will be specifically tailored to the requirements of Mongolian policymakers and responsive to priorities for reforms on the policy agenda from the point of view of the people, especially the poor and other disadvantaged groups.

My delegation expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his observation that significant progress has been made by Mongolia in ensuring a more effective follow-up to the recommendations adopted at the Fifth International Conference. I would like especially to note the group of friends of the Chair, which was established during the Fifth ICNRD with the purpose of assisting the Chair in the run-up to the next ICNRD, as an important innovation in that respect. We also agree with the Secretary-General on the necessity to further discuss the strengthening and broadening in scope and substance of the implementation process of the decisions taken at each Conference.

The Secretary-General, in his report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, also touched upon the coordination between the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and other global and regional intergovernmental democracy movements or organizations, including the Community of Democracies. Indeed, mutually supportive language has been adopted by both the ICNRD, with its all-inclusive composition, and the Community, with its more limited approach to membership. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration of the Fifth ICNRD encouraged

> "the two forums to work closely together in the pursuit of the common goal of developing and deepening democracy throughout the world",

and the Community of Democracies, at its third ministerial meeting held earlier this year in Santiago, took a commitment to

> "encourage cooperation with the ICNRD as an intergovernmental forum to promote and consolidate democratic governance in emerging and new democracies".

Mongolia, in its capacity as ICNRD Chair, a participating State of the Community of Democracies, and now a member of the Convening Group of the Community, has been proactive in its efforts to bring the two global intergovernmental movements aimed at democracy promotion and consolidation closer together. For example, Mongolia, as ICNRD Chair, participated earlier this year in the Community-led delegation to Georgia to share democratic experiences. Moreover, my delegation recently developed a non-paper on possible ways of bringing the two movements — ICNRD and the Community of Democracies — closer together and distributed it among the wide membership of the ICNRD, seeking their views. One of the first practical steps for the two movements, in our view, could be the participation of a Community of Democracies delegation in the regional activities on the exchange of experiences in follow-up to the Fifth ICNRD that Mongolia is planning to organize.

In the same vein, Mongolia can only welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to initiate a study on the comparative advantages, complementarity and desirable distribution of labour of various intergovernmental democracy movements, organizations and institutes, be they global or regional, and on how the United Nations system has worked and could further work with them in a mutually supportive way. Such a study, we hope, will be conducive to the global democracy promotion and consolidation effort by presenting concrete proposals and recommendations on streamlining and bringing more coherence into the actions of different stakeholders in that process, as well as the role and possible support of the United Nations system.

Democratization is not an event; it is a process that takes years or even decades of relentless effort. Democracy is also a process that grows from within societies, but can and should be supported from outside. The United Nations, as an embodiment of the collective will of the world's peoples, has a natural role to play in supporting democracy around the globe. It was reassuring to witness this year an important development in that particular field of United Nations activities — the establishment of the Democracy Fund at the United Nations, which my country was among the first to welcome.

The role of well-designed development and democracy-building assistance in the circumstances of an underdeveloped democracy cannot be overestimated. We must always bear in mind that there is no "one size fits all" democracy recipe, just as there are no absolutely similar recipes for development challenges. The best assistance is one that is sensitive to national specificities and also mindful of universal lessons that we have all accumulated in the past 30 years of the third wave of democratization. My delegation therefore welcomes the fact that the primary purpose of the Fund will be to support projects that consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions and facilitate democratic governance in new or restored democracies within the particular historical and cultural context of the country and region concerned, and looks forward to its early operationalization.

Guided by Mongolia's post-communist transition experience and its responsibility as Chair of the Fifth ICNRD, we believe that capacity-building and institution-building related to democratic governance and the rule of law, including aspects relevant to the implementation of international legal instruments on human rights and freedoms, should be the focus of the first-generation activities of the Democracy Fund. I would also like to emphasize that ICNRD, as an all-inclusive movement reflective of the composition of the United Nations membership, and with a serious substantive agenda on democratic governance and civil society, could also become a Democracy Fund partner in advancing the international democracy agenda.

In conclusion, let me note that my delegation will introduce in the near future a draft resolution under this agenda item, the text of which we shall distribute to all delegations early next week. We sincerely hope that the draft resolution will be able to command the same or greater support and number of sponsorships from among the Member States than in previous years.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 25 countries of the European Union. A number of other countries have aligned themselves with this statement. They are Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Iceland, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union (EU) is committed to the implementation and promotion worldwide of democratic principles. The EU warmly welcomes the reaffirmation, contained in the outcome document of the world summit, that democracy is a universal value and that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are all interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The promotion and protection of human rights are prerequisites for the existence of a democratic society, while democracy is the best means of ensuring the full realization and implementation of all human rights in the long term. Together, they help deliver genuine prosperity, progress and sustainable development. It is for this reason that the protection and advancement of democracy and the rule of law are among the top priorities for the international community.

The European Union considers that international peace and security can best be served by the spread and consolidation of democracy. A well coordinated policy within the framework of the United Nations can help to achieve peaceful solutions to the conflicts that are threatening stability in different areas of the world and to enable democracy to take root where it has never existed before, or where it has been eliminated by war, dictatorship or the breakdown of civil society.

It is equally necessary to shore up democratic institutions in countries in transition and to support democracy in all countries that have recently moved to a democratic system. We share the assessment of the Secretary-General in his report entitled "In larger freedom" that "The United Nations does more than any other single organization to promote and strengthen democratic institutions and practices around the world" (*A/59/2005, para. 151*).

Because of the authority of the United Nations, the European Union considers the United Nations the most appropriate international framework within which

to work to enhance and promote democracy and human rights throughout the world. In particular, we would like to underline the role played by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her focal point on democracy. The European Union welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund to take forward that vital work. We encourage the Secretary-General and the Fund to take stock of the experiences and activities of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations in that field and to cooperate closely with them in that task.

Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order. Accordingly, the European Union is committed to promoting democratization through its own cooperation programmes and in support of the United Nations.

The representative of Mongolia has just referred to the fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 10 to 12 September 2003. The European Union noted that the outcome of that Conference proved there was growing support for strengthening democracy in all the regions of the world. A system of government which is based on the rule of law, democracy allows the free expression of political opinions through electoral and other participatory mechanisms, and guarantees the independence of the judiciary, freedom of the media and the promotion of human society, including the fight against exclusion and poverty.

The participants in the Ulaanbaatar Conference endorsed those democratic principles while acknowledging that there was no one, ideal model for democracy. The European Union agrees. The Conference also addressed the many challenges to democracy, among which are poverty, international terrorism, transnational economic crime, HIV/AIDS and blatant disregard for human rights. It was agreed that while it is crucial to fight such threats effectively, that must be done without eroding human rights or resorting to repression.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union would like once again to thank Mongolia for successfully hosting the 2003 Conference. We look forward to the sixth International Conference that is due to take place in Qatar in November 2006 as an opportunity to consolidate the gains that have been made and to tackle the challenges ahead.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I call upon the Observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mrs. Filip (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I am pleased to take the floor and to refer to the report of the Secretary-General under consideration today on the efforts under way to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/60/556), and to expand a bit on the contribution that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is bringing to that process.

Back in 1997, the member parliaments of the IPU developed and adopted a Universal Declaration on Democracy which has since guided much of our action, particularly as it relates to providing relevant assistance to young parliamentary institutions and building capacities therein. Parliament is, after all, the main institution of the State where the voices of all, majority and minorities, should be heard and their interests adequately articulated. It is in parliaments that the diverging interests of a nation compete and are, or should be, channelled towards the single objective of ensuring the common good, which inevitably includes the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

On the occasion of the fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, some two years ago, the IPU worked together with the Parliament of Mongolia in organizing a parliamentary forum aimed at looking at the role of parliaments in promoting democracy. Indeed, as the overall theme of the fifth Conference was democracy, good governance and civil society, the theme was reflected in the parliamentary forum and participants focused on how parliaments could strengthen democracy in partnership with civil society and how that role could be fulfilled in a coherent and coordinated manner at the national and international levels. The overarching focus of the debates was participation as a cornerstone of democracy.

At the end of their deliberations, members of parliament who attended the event, numbering some 120 from over 50 countries, adopted a declaration that was subsequently endorsed by the IPU's full

membership. That declaration reiterates the core principles and values of participation, transparency and accountability and outlines the key ingredients of any democracy — respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and association, the rule of law, partnership between men and women in political life and the existence of a vibrant civil society.

The Declaration also contains a menu of proposed parliamentary action in support of democracy. It includes, but is not limited to, undertaking structural and legislative reforms at the national level to facilitate the greater participation of women in decision-making, fostering integrity and public trust and confidence in public institutions through more rigorous application of codes of conduct, and generally seeking more effective parliamentary oversight processes and structures. Also, there was a strong sense that democracy should not remain a theoretical concept.

The forum spent a great deal of time debating ways in which democracy could be translated into concrete and practical reality. For instance, democracy should help to combat corruption through more transparency in the management of public affairs as a means of ensuring accountable, honest and effective government.

The Ulaanbaatar parliamentarian forum was the first such event at the International Conference. It was thus an innovative and successful experience as evidenced by the agreement of the main Conference for it to become a permanent feature of the Conference.

Therefore, on the occasion of the sixth International Conference next year in Doha, parliamentarians will provide an important opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved in the restoration, establishment and consolidation of democratic processes at the national level — for example, more countries holding free elections, establishing representative institutions, including parliaments, and allowing for the plurality of expression. It will also allow for a review of the areas where more efforts will need to be deployed, including through more balanced representation of men and women in political processes.

For its part, the IPU has been following up on a number of the recommendations of the forum. It is currently in the process of updating its standards in the area of elections. It has recently published a compendium of expert papers on developments in the electoral field, including innovative mechanisms by which to judge elections. Early next year, it expects to publish an updated version of its publication *Free and Fair Elections: International Law and Practice*. That publication was first issued 10 years ago, and contains the text of the Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, which has been used worldwide as a guide for those involved in organizing and monitoring elections.

Another exercise on which the IPU has embarked as a direct follow-up to the parliamentarians' forum in Ulaanbaatar is a project to establish a framework for democracy from the parliamentary perspective. That project is identifying good practices by parliaments in promoting democracy, with a specific focus on representation at both the national and international levels. The resulting framework should serve as a guide for encouraging the promotion by parliaments of processes and mechanisms that enhance democracy. That project is expected to be concluded by the middle of 2006 and will serve as an important contribution to the sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the related parliamentarians' forum, to be held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2006.

Last but not least, in addition to those efforts the IPU has continued its work to assist in strengthening capacities in parliaments in emerging democracies such as Afghanistan, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Timor-Leste, Albania and — hopefully very soon — Iraq.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that the IPU welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to call for a study on the comparative advantages, complementarity and desirable distribution of labour of various intergovernmental and inter-State democracy movements, organizations and institutes, whether global or regional, and on how the United Nations system has worked and could further work with them in a mutually supportive way. The IPU stand ready to be part of that process and looks forward to a more in-depth discussion on this issue next year in Doha.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 10.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.